

INDIANA STATE SENTINEL:

A GAZETTE OF THE PEOPLE—
Office on Union Street, North of Washington.

By CHAPMANS & SPANN.

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From the Philadelphia Daily Newspaper.

Capital Punishment.

In the Democratic Review for November 1812, there was an account of the trial of Harry Blake, for murder, who was convicted upon CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE and hung. About three months after his death, the Judge who presided at the trial received a note from a prisoner under sentence of death, requesting to see him without delay, as his sentence was to be carried into effect the day following. On his way thither he overtook an old man walking slowly, who accosted him and recognized him to be Caleb Grayson, who had been a witness at Blake's trial, and had a similar note of his own, but equally at a loss to know the meaning of the summons. They both entered the cell together. The prisoner did not move, but only raised his head, when Grayson recognised having seen him at a tavern the night before Blake's execution, and at the gallows.

"Well, Judge," said he, "I sent for you to see if you can't get me out of this scrape. Must I hang to-morrow?"

The Judge shook his head; "It's idle to hope, nothing can prevent your execution."

"An application might be made to the highest authorities," said the prisoner. "Pardons have come sometimes even on the scaffold."

"None will come in your case," replied the Judge, "it is needless for me to dwell on your offence now, but it was one that had no palliation, and you may rest assured that whatever may have occurred in other cases no pardon will come in yours. In fact, I understand that an application has been made to one, by your counsel, and has been refused."

The features of the prisoner underwent no change; nor did the expression of his face alter in the least. But after a moment's pause, he said: "Is this true, Judge—upon your honor?"

"It is," replied the Judge.

"Then I know the worst," replied the criminal coldly, "and will tell what I have to communicate, which I would not have done while there was a hope of escape. You," said he, turning to the Judge, "presided at the trial of young Harry Blake, who was accused of murder, and sentenced him to death."

"Did?"

"And you," said he, turning to Grayson, "was one of the witnesses against him. You swore that you saw him stab Wickliffe. On your testimony, principally, he was hung."

"It was," replied the old man; "I saw him with my own eyes."

The prisoner uttered a low, sneering laugh as he said, turning to the Judge:

"You, sir, sentenced an innocent man."

"And you," said he, turning to the other swore to a falsehood. Harry Blake did not kill Wickliffe. He was as innocent of the sin of murder as you were—more innocent than you are now."

The old man staggered as if he had been struck, and leaned against the table to support himself, whilst the condemned fellow stood opposite him, looking at him with a cold, indifferent air.

"Yes, old man," said he sternly, "you have blood and perfidy on your soul, for I, I, said he stepping forward, so that the light of the lamp fell strongly upon his savage features, I murdered William Wickliffe! I did it! Thank God I did it, for I had a long score to settle with him. But Blake had no hand in it. I met Wickliffe on that afternoon, alone—with none to interfere between us. I told him of the injuries he had done me, and I told him that the time was come for redress. He endeavored to escape, but I followed him up; I grappled with him and stabbed him. As I did so, I heard the clatter of horse's hoofs, and I leaped into a clump of bushes which grew at the roadside. At that moment Blake came up and found Wickliffe lying dead in the road. You know the rest. The tale he told was as true as the gospel. He was only attempting to draw the knife from the man's breast, when you came up and charged him with the murder!"

"Good God! Can this be possible!" ejaculated the old man. "It cannot! Villain, you are a liar!"

"Pshaw!" muttered the man. "What could I gain by a lie? To-morrow I die."

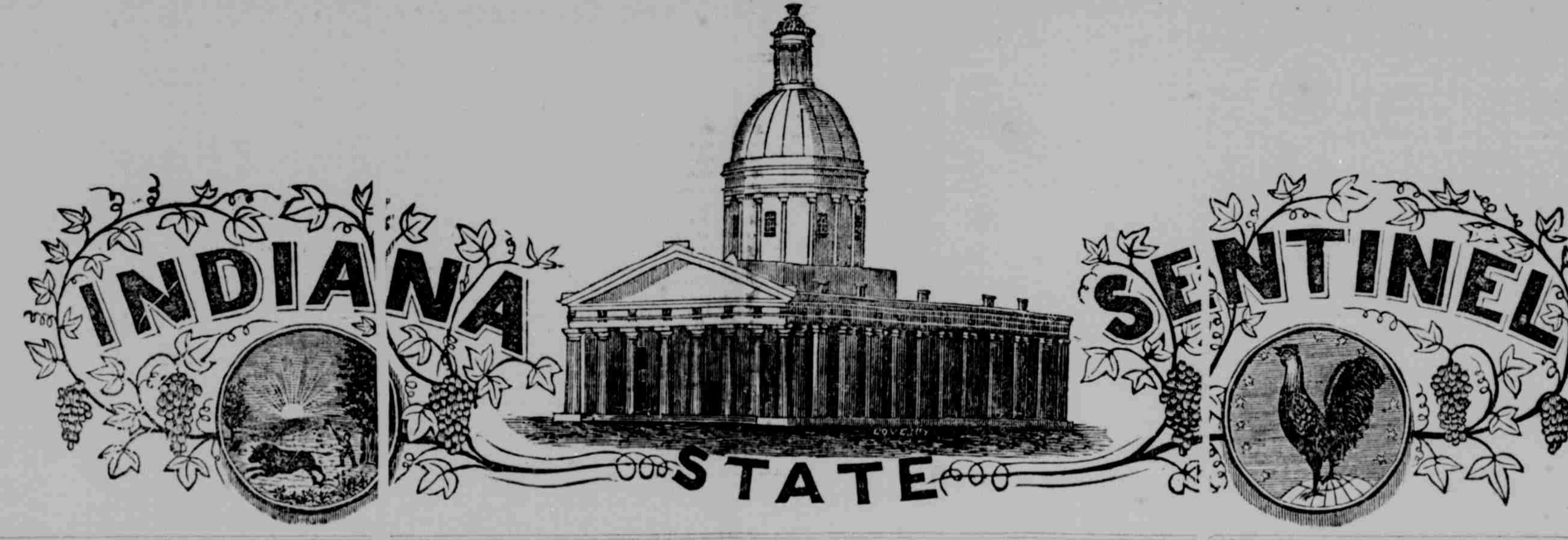
"I don't believe it; I don't believe it!" exclaimed Grayson, pacing the cell and wringing his hands. "God in mercy grant that it may be false! that this dreadful sin may not be upon me!"

The prisoner sat down and looked at the Judge and the witness with a calmness which had something almost fiendish in it, when contrasted with the extreme agitation of the one and the mental agony of the other.

At last the old man stopped in front of him; and with a calmness so suddenly assumed in the midst of his paroxysm of remorse, that it even overawed the criminal, said:

"You are one whose life has been a tissue of falsehood and crime. You must prove what you have said, or I'll not believe it."

"Be it so," replied the prisoner, "I saw the whole transaction, and heard all your testimony at the trial; for I was there too. I'll now tell you what occurred at the spot of the murder, which you did not mention, but which I saw. When you rode up, the man with you jumped off his horse and seized Blake



Indianapolis, December 18, 1847.]

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by the collar; your hat fell off on the pomel of your saddle, but you caught it before it reached the ground. You then sprang off your horse, and whilst Walton held Blake, you examined the body. You attempted to pull the knife from his breast, but it was covered with blood and slipped from your fingers. You rubbed your hand on the ground, and, going to a bush on the roadside, broke off some leaves and wiped your hands upon them, and afterwards the handle of the knife. You then drew it out, and washed it in a small puddle of water at the foot of a sun-mush bush. As you did so, you looked round at Blake, who was standing with his arms folded, and said, "don't be uneasy about me, Caleb; I didn't kill Wickliffe, and don't intend to escape." At one time, you were within six feet of where I was. It's lucky you did not find me, for I was ready at that moment to send you to keep company with Wickliffe, but I saw all, even when you stumbled and dropped your gloves, as you mounted your horse."

"God have mercy on me!" ejaculated Grayson. This is all true! But one word more, I heard Wickliffe, as we rode up, shriek out,

"Mercy, mercy, Harry!"

He was begging for his life—my first name is Harry?"

The old man clasped his hands across his face, and fell senseless on the floor.

It is needless to go into details of the prisoner's confession, which was so full and clear that it left no doubt on the mind of the Judge that he was guilty of Wickliffe's murder, and that Harry Blake was another of those who had gone to swell the list of victims to circumstantial evidence.

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